

# **State of Alaska FY2010 Governor's Operating Budget**

## **Department of Health and Social Services State Medical Examiner Component Budget Summary**

## Component: State Medical Examiner

### Contribution to Department's Mission

The department's mission is to promote and protect the health and well being of Alaskans. In support of this mission, the State Medical Examiner's Office (SMEO) provides a statewide system for the medical-legal investigation of unanticipated, sudden and violent deaths in order to provide accurate, legally defensible determinations of the cause of death, information to ensure appropriate follow-up on all child deaths in the state, and surveillance to detect new or unexpected infectious diseases.

### Core Services

- As required by law, investigate and certify all deaths that occur within the state of Alaska that are a result of violence, suspected violence, deaths due to accidental causes, deaths that occur during incarceration, deaths that are associated with conditions that pose a hazard to public safety or health, and all unattended or unexplained deaths.
- The central facility in Anchorage provides postmortem examinations appropriate for each case referred and includes access to state-of-the-art forensic medical services, including forensic pathology and radiology, odontology, anthropology, and the services of Public Health Laboratories and the Department of Public Safety Crime Detection Laboratory.
- For deaths that are investigated, establish identification of the deceased, if necessary; maintain records and evidence, and provide legally defensible determinations of the cause and manner of death. Present findings of the investigation to courts, law enforcement agencies, and other parties with legitimate interests in the death.
- Examine living persons to collect evidence as a result of previous injuries, and provide expert testimony in these cases.
- Participate in training personnel involved in death investigations, including forensic medico-legal investigators, local physicians, state and local police, village public safety officers and other authorities.

### FY2010 Resources Allocated to Achieve Results

<b>FY2010 Component Budget: \$2,244,400</b>	<b>Personnel:</b>	
	Full time	17
	Part time	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>

### Key Component Challenges

- Working to increase the number of statewide autopsies, consults, teaching and required expert testimony for numerous legal cases is difficult without adequate staffing by forensic pathologists. The SMEO regularly experiences difficulties in recruiting and retaining medical examiners, often because of low comparable salaries and the high cost of living in Alaska. However, because the office is fully staffed with five investigators and autopsy assistants, when and if it can successfully recruit a chief and another deputy medical examiner, the office would be able to meet the expectations of increased autopsies performed and surveillance to detect new or unexpected infectious diseases.
- Replacing aging equipment in the autopsy and embalming suites as funds are made available while remaining OSHA compliant.
- The office will continue on the prescribed track towards accreditation, following the guidelines of the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME).

## Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2010

No significant changes in results.

## Major Component Accomplishments in 2008

Total cases reported:	1,525
Cases autopsied:	238
Cases with consult:	974
Cases with inspection:	27
Cases with natural cause:	286

- Successfully completed the upgrade of aging X-ray equipment to a state-of-the-art digital system.
- Continued on the accreditation track, as recommended by the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME). This included hiring one additional investigator and autopsy assistant to bring staff numbers more in tune with the population numbers for case processing.
- The Child Fatality Review Committee continued the review of child death cases. This is a collaborative effort between SMEO, District Attorney's Office, State Troopers, Anchorage Police Department, social workers from Child Protective Services (CPS), physicians who specialize in pediatrics and forensic nurses. The Chief Medical Examiner is the chairman of this committee.
- In collaboration with the anthropology staff at the University of Alaska and a forensic odontologist, SMEO continues to successfully identify John or Jane Doe decedents brought in for processing. SME worked with the Cold Case Unit, Alaska State Troopers (FBI project) and investigators, to solve cases and identify missing persons. SMEO continues to fund the Bone Committee Project to better catalog and document found remains. This has helped with an expeditious repatriation of remains, when necessary.
- Collaborated with numerous state and federal agencies to gather statistics. This information was for local and national programs, which may provide information for consumers, work-related accidents, violent deaths, and motor vehicle accidents, to name a few.
- The medical examiner's provided expert testimony in court cases throughout Alaska.
- The completion of a web-based database that meets DPH standards. With the completion of several years of research, collaboration with IT, and various others, SMEO will now have a state-of-the-art database for all case files, research capabilities, statistical reporting and managing case files in a more comprehensive manner. This database is web-based and will eventually allow other DPH sections and federal and state agencies to extract information needed to complete statistical formulations. The new database was scheduled to go live in December 2008.
- Collaborated with the Section of Epidemiology in various epidemiological studies regarding deaths by alcohol, firearms and occupational deaths.
- Public Health Labs is the main toxicology laboratory for SMEO at this time. The lab is processing alcohol, carbon monoxide, and occasionally some types of drug screens.
- SMEO presented lectures for law enforcement recruits in both Sitka and Fairbanks.
- While the search for a permanent chief medical examiner continues, the SMEO since June 2008 has had a board certified forensic pathologist on contract. This has reduced the burden for the deputy medical examiner greatly.
- Continued bringing laboratories up to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards.
- Continued the monthly staff trainings to ensure that the employees know the proper way to handle all bio-hazardous materials and to help employees protect themselves from contagious disease. Training included treating every new case as if it were a bio-hazard/contagious case, proper apparel, MSDS forms and where they are located, blood borne pathogens.
- Purchased a new 2008 Chevrolet Express Van for body removals. The new van has been outfitted with appropriate lights, sirens, specialized equipment for safety and easier, safer removal of bodies from the scene for transport to the Medical Examiner facility.
- Continued equipment upgrades and purchased a zoom stereo microscope mounted to a moveable pole stand for use in the autopsy suite for viewing specimens during the autopsy.
- The SMEO is in the midst of a major reorganization to help expedite information required by families for closure, both emotional and legal.

## Statutory and Regulatory Authority

AS 12.65  
7 AAC 35

Death Investigations and Medical Examinations  
Embalming and Other Post-Mortem Services

Contact Information
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**State Medical Examiner  
Component Financial Summary**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

	FY2008 Actuals	FY2009 Management Plan	FY2010 Governor
<b>Non-Formula Program:</b>			
<b>Component Expenditures:</b>			
71000 Personal Services	1,212.2	1,587.4	1,773.6
72000 Travel	59.6	43.5	43.5
73000 Services	496.3	317.0	322.6
74000 Commodities	86.8	104.7	104.7
75000 Capital Outlay	0.0	0.0	0.0
77000 Grants, Benefits	0.0	0.0	0.0
78000 Miscellaneous	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Expenditure Totals</b>	<b>1,854.9</b>	<b>2,052.6</b>	<b>2,244.4</b>
<b>Funding Sources:</b>			
1002 Federal Receipts	6.0	0.0	11.0
1004 General Fund Receipts	1,840.1	2,042.6	2,223.4
1156 Receipt Supported Services	8.8	10.0	10.0
<b>Funding Totals</b>	<b>1,854.9</b>	<b>2,052.6</b>	<b>2,244.4</b>

**Estimated Revenue Collections**

Description	Master Revenue Account	FY2008 Actuals	FY2009 Management Plan	FY2010 Governor
<b>Unrestricted Revenues</b>				
None.		0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Unrestricted Total</b>		<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Restricted Revenues</b>				
Federal Receipts	51010	6.0	0.0	11.0
Receipt Supported Services	51073	8.8	10.0	10.0
<b>Restricted Total</b>		<b>14.8</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>21.0</b>
<b>Total Estimated Revenues</b>		<b>14.8</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>21.0</b>

**Summary of Component Budget Changes  
From FY2009 Management Plan to FY2010 Governor**

*All dollars shown in thousands*

	<u>General Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
<b>FY2009 Management Plan</b>	<b>2,042.6</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>2,052.6</b>
<b>Adjustments which will continue current level of service:</b>				
-Transfer Administrative positions/funding from DSS/Administrative Support Services	72.1	0.0	0.0	72.1
-Transfer PCN 06-1784 from Public Health Administration	76.1	11.0	0.0	87.1
-FY2010 Wage and Health Insurance Increases for Bargaining Units with Existing Agreements	32.6	0.0	0.0	32.6
<b>FY2010 Governor</b>	<b>2,223.4</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>2,244.4</b>

**State Medical Examiner  
Personal Services Information**

Authorized Positions			Personal Services Costs	
	FY2009 Management Plan	FY2010 Governor		
Full-time	15	17	Annual Salaries	1,048,343
Part-time	0	0	COLA	31,392
Nonpermanent	0	0	Premium Pay	106,391
			Annual Benefits	591,802
			<i>Less 0.24% Vacancy Factor</i>	(4,328)
			Lump Sum Premium Pay	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Total Personal Services</b>	<b>1,773,600</b>

**Position Classification Summary**

Job Class Title	Anchorage	Fairbanks	Juneau	Others	Total
Administrative Assistant II	1	0	0	0	1
Administrative Clerk II	1	0	0	0	1
Administrative Clerk III	1	0	0	0	1
Autopsy Assistant	3	0	0	0	3
Embalmer	2	0	0	0	2
Investigator I	4	0	0	0	4
Investigator II	1	0	0	0	1
Investigator III	1	0	0	0	1
Staff Physician	2	0	0	0	2
State Medical Examiner/Chief	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>